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With song! . . . with one sob interwoven.
 How the music swells, triumphant, loud!
Mother, Mother, art thou not proud
That thy Koto has become, at only seven, a Great
One?

THE TENDEREST GOD

Out of a laughing, leaping, tumbling crowd
 Of playmates Spirit is calling thee,
 Koto, little one!
 Bind the swift sandals about thy feet;
 Thou must be fleet, fleet!
 Long in the road to Meido, aye, and dark;

But see'st thou not, for thy sake, a spark
 Leap in the Temple-garden here and there
 Till every lantern glows, ruddy and fair?
 Hearest thou not, for thee, now soft, now loud,
 The Temple-bells sonorous swinging
 From a faint sighing to a full harmony?
 Hearest thou not the triumph of their ringing?
 See, O young wrestler with the Ancient Foe,
 I hold thy garments, leave thee free for flight,
 And tenderly, tenderly,
 I guard upon my knees thy ball and kite!
 They shall be thine again on the New Day.

Art ready, little warrior? . . .
Speed away!

Helen Coale Crew

"DARK PLACES"

A STORY

BY DUFFIELD OSBORNE

THE big lateen sail flapped aimlessly. There was no breath of air; only the long swell of the Ægean rolled the felucca gently to and fro. About five miles to the southeast, but seemingly much nearer in the clear air, rose the rocky shore of an island running up to a ridge of considerable height that ended in two promontories and cut off whatever might lie beyond. That this was the greater part could be guessed from the three columns that stood, like sentinels, on the farther promontory, the remains, evidently, of a temple of considerable size; one that augured in ancient times a population far too numerous for the short slope visible from shore to ridge. No house showed there save one low, rambling building of stone covered with stucco.

All these things Knowles saw as he lay in his hammock under the miniature awning. Hardly ten feet of his little craft was decked over. The rest was open—and there sprawled old Demetrios, captain, mate, A.B., steward and cook of the *Panagia*. Near him, with hands clasping his knees, sat his nephew Alkibiades—deck-hand, waiter, cabin boy, etc., and as handsome, surely, as was the brilliant, erratic Athenian whose name he bore, though its pronunciation: Alkevia-thes, might have sounded barbaric to the ancient ear. It was three in the afternoon, and the sun still beat down hard. No wind to sail by. Nothing to do but rest and keep as comfortable as one could.

Knowles broke the silence. "What's the island, Demetrios?"

The old man sat up and, shielding his eyes with his hand, gazed long at the shore, as if he had just become conscious of its presence.

"Sparring for time?" smiled Knowles. "Don't you know?"

"No, Master, I do not know."

The excuse proffered was snapped up so quickly that Knowles at once guessed it a lie. An American, interested in archæology in a desultory way, he had made Greece his abiding place, if not his home, for

the past three years, and the native character was not unknown to him. Why, though, should the master of the *Panagia* lie to him about so simple a matter as the name of an island? To charge him with it was, of course, useless, so he asked carelessly:

"Who lives in the house there?"

"A foolish Englishman," answered the old sailor, thrown off his guard. "I do not know his name."

Knowles laughed out. "Gave yourself away, Demetrios," he cried. "You know who lives there and don't know the name of the place. Too thin. Come now, what is it?"

The old man had risen to his feet: "It is bad luck to name it," he said sulkily—then, with a quick smile—"O! but the master is clever. He caught old Demetrios nicely."

Knowles was thinking. Rather bored with things in general—too much money and not sufficiently definite interests—the combination of a foolish Englishman living in the only house at one end of an island with an unlucky name struck him as interesting.

"We'll row up there when the sun gets lower," he said. "Perhaps your friend, the Englishman, will put us up for the night. Better than the bunk? Yes?"

Demetrios's smile faded. "I will not sleep there" he said sulkily.

Knowles eyed him curiously. "Very well" he said. "You needn't. You can put me ashore before dark and then anchor where you please. Your Englishman may be a fool, but it strikes me the word needs an adjective to fit you."

The Greek shifted uneasily from one foot to the other. It seemed hard for him to find words, but at last they broke out, like a torrent when the dam has suddenly given way.

"In the name of all the saints, Master, do not sleep there! God knows. I may wait for you off the shore and you will not come. What then is there for old Demetrios? He must sail away and leave his

employer behind. That is disgraceful. See! we shall all anchor very nicely off the shore. That will be safe, and in the morning the Holy Mary will send us a breeze. Shall it not be so?"

With every word Knowles's curiosity and interest had risen higher.

"It won't do, old boy" he said pleasantly. "It's the shore for mine! Between ourselves, though, just what is wrong with the place? Of course, if the thing is really fatal" he went on craftily "I might give in; but it hasn't killed your Englishman, has it?"

"I do not know" said Demetrios shortly.

"Don't know what?" queried Knowles.

But, as if regretting his outburst and fearing its repetition, the Greek was again sulkily silent, and when the sun had nearly gone down and he and Alkibiades, on order, took to the sweeps, the gloom lay deep upon his swarthy, wrinkled face. Set on shore, Knowles watched them row off again with an energy that had been quite lacking to the approach. Then he turned and walked toward the house.

As he drew nearer its "deadness" struck him. A furlong back from the water, it lay under the sharply rising ridge cleft with deep and gloomy ravines. Painted and apparently in excellent repair, a chilly aloofness seemed to hang over the place. It was not until he was within a few feet of the door that he saw signs of life. Then it opened and a girl stood in its shadow. Knowles stopped short and raised his hat. He had begun to wonder whether the thing Demetrios feared had not got the foolish Englishman after all, and to speculate how he could signal the felucca to take him off again. Now he saw a trim figure with a pretty face and a crown of golden hair that quite changed his viewpoint. Then, suddenly, instead of waiting his approach, as so conventional appearing person should, she ran toward him.

"Who are you? How did you get here?" she asked quickly. "Have you seen my father?"

Knowles, while a fairly self-possessed young man, was dazed.

"No" he said, answering her last question first, and then: "You see I'm cruising round in a felucca I hired at Athens and I knew there were English people living here and thought I'd drop ashore and pay my respects. I'm an American: John Knowles."

She was nodding her head as he spoke. "I wonder your sailors dared come near enough to land you" she said bitterly, and then: "O! I wish father were home! He promised to be back long before sunset. He is not even on the path and it gets dark so quickly!"

She looked long and searchingly along the face of the ridge, then back at Knowles, and her shoulders seemed to droop. Evidently there was much here that needed explanation, and yet he did not wish to ask questions blunderingly. "If I can help you" he said at last "pray command me."

It sounded coldly formal but she snapped him up eagerly. "Are you superstitious?" she demanded.

Knowles laughed. "Not that I know of" he said.

She nodded her head at him slowly. "I'd have put it stronger than that, a year ago. Now—I don't know—O! yes I do! What's the use of lying to oneself? I know I'm afraid and I don't know what I'm afraid of. Can you help any one who feels that way?"

He was groping for foothold, sure enough, now; dragged out of his *ennui* with a vengeance and launched on what seemed adventure or something very near it. Then suddenly, a possible explanation of it all crossed his mind—a hermit Englishman with an insane daughter! That and its possible manifestations might easily give rise to almost any kind of local yarns. But he looked again at the girl more closely, and the thought vanished. She was waiting for his answer and her eyes, big, blue ones and troubled, were yet clear and sane beyond any peradventure.

"I fear" he began "that you give me credit for knowing more than I do. If you'll tell me what the trouble is and I can do anything, you can be sure I will."

He was not speaking formally now. There was something in his voice that meant eagerness. Knowles was a little over thirty and a little over average height: brown and wiry, with clean-cut, strong features. There was something reassuring about him, something that might inspire confidence of several kinds. Her face grew less strained and troubled.

"I thought you knew. I thought every one knew" she said. "I did not think there was a Greek sailor who would put you ashore here. We have no servants. I take all care of the house. If you don't know, there's no time for me to tell you now, even if I could. I'm worried about father. He *must* be home before dark and I don't see how he can."

"Where is he?"

"On the ridge; at the temple. He is excavating there. Workmen from the villages beyond will come as far as that, but not one of them would come here for a year's wages. My father wished to excavate, but he did not know. The villa was empty and we got it for nothing—just for putting it in order. O! why did not he get quarters beyond the ridge! That is safe, and—and—" She stopped short.

"And what?" asked Knowles, still groping.

"Different" she cried.

"But why are you worried about your father" he said, shifting to what seemed something definite. "It's full moonlight. He'll have no trouble finding his way home."

"It's not that. Will you go with me, up the path—to meet him? You are not afraid?"

"Of course I'll go" he said, but almost before the words were out she had turned and was hurrying away.

"Come then" she called back and he followed. He had not answered her absurd question about his being afraid, and suddenly, as the path grew more abrupt and the dark shadows deepened, he became conscious that the question did not seem altogether absurd to him now. There could be nothing to fear—and yet—well, was it strange if Demetrios and the girl together had not got on his nerves a bit?

He found it hard to keep up with her. The path grew steeper and steeper, but she bounded along it like a mountain goat. Suddenly she stopped short and seemed to listen.

"Did you hear anything?" she whispered, drawing back to him as he came up. He shook his head. Then, clearly and distinctly, a low groan came from the ravine to the right.

He turned quickly and peered over into the darkness below. She was close beside him, also peering and listening. Unmistakably the groan sounded again and, in a moment, he was plunging down. Ten feet of descent, and he stopped by the body of a man lying across the rocks.

"It is my father" said the voice still at his ear. O! how can we get him home? We must go quickly, or—we can carry him, can't we? Hurry! let us hurry!"

Knowles was examining the man. His head was cut slightly—perhaps there was a concussion or even a fractured skull, though no depression could be felt. Certainly it was necessary to get him down to the house, and fortunately he did not seem to be very large or stout.

"Can you help me get him on my back?" said Knowles. "I think I can carry him that way. His arms seem all right."

She nodded. Her face showed very white.

Up to the path and then down it to the house under such a burden was no easy task for one not accustomed to first-aid methods. Knowles never quite knew how he accomplished it. The girl flitted along beside him, and when the injured man groaned her hand went out as if to steady him. At last they reached the house. Then the undressing and getting the patient into bed and patched up were easier, but it was nine o'clock before the American had time to realize that he was utterly exhausted and desperately hungry. How must *she* feel, with the anxiety added! Suddenly conscious of his needs, she turned to him as he sat beside the bed:

"Dinner is on the table in there" she said motioning toward the next room. "It's not good now. Perhaps I can get you something else."

"You must not bother about me" he said hurriedly. "It will be all right; but you must come and eat, too. He will be perfectly safe and we can talk over what's best to do."

She shook her head. "I can't leave him; not for a moment. He may say something that will tell me," and then with a hopeless intonation "there's nothing we can do. It had to happen!"

Despite his sympathy Knowles began to grow impatient toward this attitude. Were she not in such trouble, and—well, quite so pretty—he would have insisted on plain talk, something that would really help him to understand, instead of vague suggestions of unnamed dangers. He got up and went into what he took to be the dining-room.

Cold meat, potatoes once hot but now equally cold, bread, fruit and wine were on the table. He took a full glass of the last—a rough *resinata* with at least plenty of strength. Then he filled the other glass and, putting some slices of bread and a few figs on a plate, he took them in to his companion.

"You must eat and drink these" he said authoritatively, and as she seemed about to protest "and you must do it before I'll eat a mouthful."

With a glance at him she took the plate and the glass, and, going again, he filled others for himself and brought them back. Sitting side by side, they ate and drank in silence.

Knowles was thinking hard. If no one would come here; then, unless the patient was much better by morning, he must get them both on the felucca and make sail for the nearest surgeon. Meanwhile—

suddenly the man in the bed sat up, his hands thrust out before him, his face turned away. His voice rose almost to a shriek.

"Don't you hear it hiss? O! the horror!" He sank back shuddering on the pillow.

The girl bowed her head beside him, sobbing. Knowles put his hand on her shoulder. Startled as he was, his mind worked clearly.

"He's not so badly hurt or he couldn't have done that" he said. "I'm not up on such things, but I'll warrant it's only a cut and perhaps a slight concussion: maybe some shock or fright."

"Yes, fright" she said, raising her head. "That was it. He's frightened still, and he pretended he was not, all the time, just to make me comfortable."

"What did he mean by 'the hiss'?" asked Knowles.

"O! don't ask me. I don't know."

Again she buried her face in the pillow, but the American was shaping a theory. A snake hisses and a snake was generally considered horrible. Probably the man had been startled by a serpent and fallen off the path. Nothing vaguely appalling about that. The girl's hand lay on the counterpane; a small, slender hand on one finger of which was a disproportionately large silver ring, clumsily made and with a dull, white stone that seemed set in a swivel. Anything to distract her was worth while.

"It's all right" he said, "I'm sure you need not worry. May I see that ring you wear? It interests me."

She sat up and, drawing the ring from her finger, gave it to him. "We found the stone in a grave just beyond where father fell to-night. I had it set by a Greek in the town at the other end of the island. It's ugly, but it all goes together well, doesn't it?"

At last she seemed alive and natural, and Knowles, as he took the stone over to the light, wondered at the sudden change. Then his interest in the object itself absorbed him for the moment.

It was apparently a soft stone, probably steatite, considerably worn, cut in crude scaraboid shape and bored through the longer axis. On the flat side was a rude intaglio, quite spirited, nevertheless, in execution: a winged demon, half man, half fish holding a serpent in each hand. Knowles knew enough of such things to recognize it as what is known as an "island stone" belonging to the seventh century B. C. or thereabouts.

The girl was watching him with the nearest to a smile he had yet seen on her face. "Do you like it?" she said. "If you do I wish you'd keep it. You've been awfully good to us."

Put that way, Knowles felt embarrassed, but he hesitated to dissent in a small matter now, and—well, he could give it back on some pretext when he went away!

"Why, thank you very much" he said. "I'll wear it if you like, while I'm here. Perhaps it will bring good luck."

Her face clouded suddenly. "We need good luck badly" she said. Then she laughed. "It's all right though, if father gets well and we can make him leave this place. Perhaps he will now."

Altogether her mood seemed brighter, and Knowles agreed to lie down for a few hours, she to waken him at two o'clock to take his turn at watching the injured man.

If he only could sleep! but why should such a thought come into his head? He always slept when

he pleased. Now, the idea that he might not be able to seemed itself a bar. He drowsed occasionally, lashing about on the couch and fighting weird nightmares until complete wakefulness seemed the greatest of blessings. He did not need to be called at two. It was he who summoned the girl to fulfil her compact and lie down.

She at least was cheerful if he was not. "You're sure you're rested a little?" she asked. "After such a reception as you've had here you can't expect much, you know."

"Fresh as a lark" said Knowles; but the effort it took to say it jarred him, and the girl shot a sharp glance, as if, to her ears, the words sounded forced.

Still she said nothing as she went out, and Knowles took his place by the couch.

The man on it was breathing more regularly and easily now. The American had sat by for perhaps a couple of hours, renewing the warm water compresses, from time to time. It was well toward daylight when he became conscious that the patient's eyes were open, looking at him with a puzzled expression. The lips moved and mumbled words came to his ears.

"Fools! twenty-five hundred years old. Not much of a hero. Wish I'd given him some wine and a few cakes, all the same. Where did you get that ring?"

The voice rose sharply. The eyes were fixed on Knowles's hand.

"O!" said he "I admired it and your daughter let me wear it a while."

"Don't"; and the man closed his eyes again and became silent.

As the grayness came slowly out of the dark, Knowles found himself gravely piecing together impossible things. The tomb of a "hero"—not necessarily what we mean by the word today, but what the ancient Greeks meant—a progenitor who had been regarded as semi-divine after death—his tomb a place to make offerings, sometimes to win aid or favor, but more often to avert evil, for most of these personages had died from violence or treachery, and the spirit ever sought revenge. The serpent? That was of the Underworld: the form the malignant spirit was supposed to take before men. Good Lord!

... he sprang up and paced the room as if to make the less sluggishly moving blood sweep away the depression that was on him. It was the gray hour, the hour when men most often die, that filled his mind with such thoughts. As he paced nervously back and forth he saw that the eyes on the couch were again open and following his movements. They caught his:

"Perhaps it isn't as foolish as we think" said the man. "We don't know everything, and they were great men."

Knowles hardly realized how his thoughts had been divined. All he felt was that if he discussed them then he would scream like a frightened girl. With an effort he brought himself in hand:

"How do you feel?" he asked. "Better I'm sure."

"O! I'm all right. What happened to me? I'm a bit bruised and stiff, and my head feels queer."

"You walked off the path in the dark" said Knowles, and then he went on to explain who he was and how he came to be on the scene, ending laughingly: "and I don't even know your name. Both your daughter and I were too troubled and busy to think of the formalities."

"Hendon" said the man. "I'm Edmund Hendon" and Knowles recalled the name, well known in the archæological world of a decade back but somehow forgotten later. He had rather fancied Hendon was dead. Now here he was, perhaps saved from death, perhaps from something else, and fast coming around from the shock of his fall.

"I'll get you some coffee. I can find it."

Hendon nodded. "It would be good" he said "but don't wake Amy. I'd rather wait."

Knowles found things without much difficulty: coffee and a can of condensed milk. There was not much to look among, and, just as he was bringing it to the invalid, Miss Hendon appeared.

Her looks were a revelation. He had thought her attractive, even when he doubted her sanity. Now she was radiant—almost gay, and he—he found himself altogether depressed and "all in." The "rebound" of women had always surprised him; but never had he known so striking a case as this. Hendon, too, seemed brighter and more cheerful every minute.

"Miss Hendon, my daughter" he said gravely, as she kissed him. "May I present Mr. Knowles, an American. Seems to me a little upset like this of mine ought not to make even young people forget all the proprieties."

Amy laughed, glad in his evident improvement. "I'm delighted to meet you, Mr. Knowles" she said, courtesying deeply. "Now if you don't mind I'll go and get you some breakfast."

He bowed. Somehow all the spirit had gone out of him. Attractive as she was in her new mood, even Miss Hendon failed to interest him, while, as for breakfast, what was the use? Still, when she called him, he joined her and went through the pretense of eating. Several times she tried to draw him out, now with light badinage, again with more serious talk. At last, resting her chin in her hands, her elbows on the table, she said:

"I really believe it's got *you*; and so quickly! I was here several weeks quite free from it, and then never a minute without its horrors. Somehow it's all slipped off with your coming. It almost seems as if I'd passed it on to you. Father has been different. With him it comes and goes."

While she spoke, all the impressions and nightmares that had oppressed him seemed slowly to take shape in his mind: not a reasonable shape, but one at first as vague and shadowy as the things that made it. In part it was a sense of peril that came to him, in part revolt against it, ending in an overpowering impulse to act. Why he wished to do a certain thing he could not tell; neither what he would do next; but the first step showed clear.

"Will you take me at noon to the tomb where you found this stone?" he asked. "You need not go yourself. Take me near and show me where it is. Do not tell your father I am going!"

For a moment her face showed surprise, and he flushed, surprised too, at what he had heard himself say. Then she went pale.

"Yes, I'll take you" she said. "I'll take you all the way. I'm not afraid now."

"I am, but I'm going. I don't know why. I only know I *must* go."

"Yes" she nodded. "I understand. I've felt it several times but not strong enough to make me go. I too was afraid, then, and my fear won out."

The morning dragged along heavily, only relieved by the rapid improvement in Hendon, who was now able to sit up. Toward noon the excuse to leave him came of itself. He had been worrying about the workmen at the temple, with no one to direct them and ignorant of their employer's wishes. Therefore it was easy for Miss Hendon to go. She was not to say her father had been hurt, but merely that he was otherwise busy and that they were to have a holiday of a week. When Knowles offered to accompany her, there was both relief and satisfaction in Hendon's face.

Up the path, but now in full daylight, they hurried together, though the American was conscious that, despite the mid-day sun, there was yet chill and dampness in the air. They seemed to rise, almost like vapors, from the many ravines that scarred the slope. To find oneself shivering in Greece at that hour and season, even when climbing a hill, was an odd experience.

Once on the summit, warmth enveloped him, and the chillness seemed left behind. As they approached the three columns a dozen peasants, who had been lounging around, ran to meet them. Knowles thought he saw anxiety in their faces and doubt when Miss Hendon spoke, easily, of the holiday because of other work of her father's. He almost found himself wondering whether, perhaps, some of these rough looking fellows might not know something of the "accident." As the two turned toward the shore, the workmen stood gazing after them with varying expressions: doubt, anxiety—these seemed best defined. Soon their figures were lost behind the inequalities of the ridge.

"Now you shall see the tomb" whispered Miss Hendon.

Knowles nodded. Neither spoke again. Half way down the path his guide halted.

On one side was the sharp declivity where Hendon had fallen. On the other what seemed to be a narrow, winding gorge that branched off.

"It is there" she said "only a few steps."

For a moment he fancied she wished him to go on alone, but when he started he found her only a step behind. If the impulse had been there, she had overcome it quickly. An exclamation and a hand clutching his shoulder brought him to a sudden halt:

"Look!" she whispered. "My God! look at that!"

Knowles gazed, spellbound.

A few yards ahead the gorge ended in a *cul-de-sac*. Rocky walls rose on three sides, and in the one straight before him he saw a narrow, longitudinal cleft, natural, perhaps, in its origin but certainly worked over by men's hands. Above it rose a sort of

stele, with a figure of some sort and a deeply incised inscription, all too much worn by tens of centuries to be distinguishable; and before it in a small circular space—also apparently shaped to some extent—was the foundation of an altar, several feet square. It was not these things, though, that had brought the girl's exclamation and his sudden halt.

Rising from the cleft in the rock before him was a great, black head, fearsome and menacing, and several feet of a serpent's body, thick as a man's lower leg. The species he did not know, but from what he saw he augured a length of ten or fifteen feet, at the least. This head swayed slowly from side to side, and the eyes seemed to pierce straight into his own. The girl's hand, still on his shoulder, was trembling violently.

Then suddenly there came to him an impulse—whence or how he could never tell—but overwhelming in its power.

"Stay here" he said. Then, drawing the ring she had given him from his finger, he stepped forward and laid it on the middle of the ruined altar.

The terrible head still swayed from side to side out of the grave. He drew back to Miss Hendon and waited.

Moments seemed like hours . . . slowly the great, black body writhed out—endlessly, and toward them.

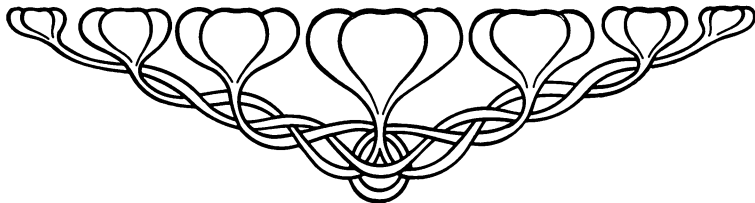
He had taken her by the hand, but now it did not tremble, and somehow all fear and depression had gone from him together with the ring. The head rose above the altar foundation and still some of the serpent's length remained hidden in the rock. . . . He knew what was going to happen: he did not wonder. In later years he might think of it as a hideous dream, but now it all seemed natural—the only thing that *could* happen. Slowly the head curved down and took the ring in its mouth. Then the body writhed back and disappeared in the cleft rock. . . .

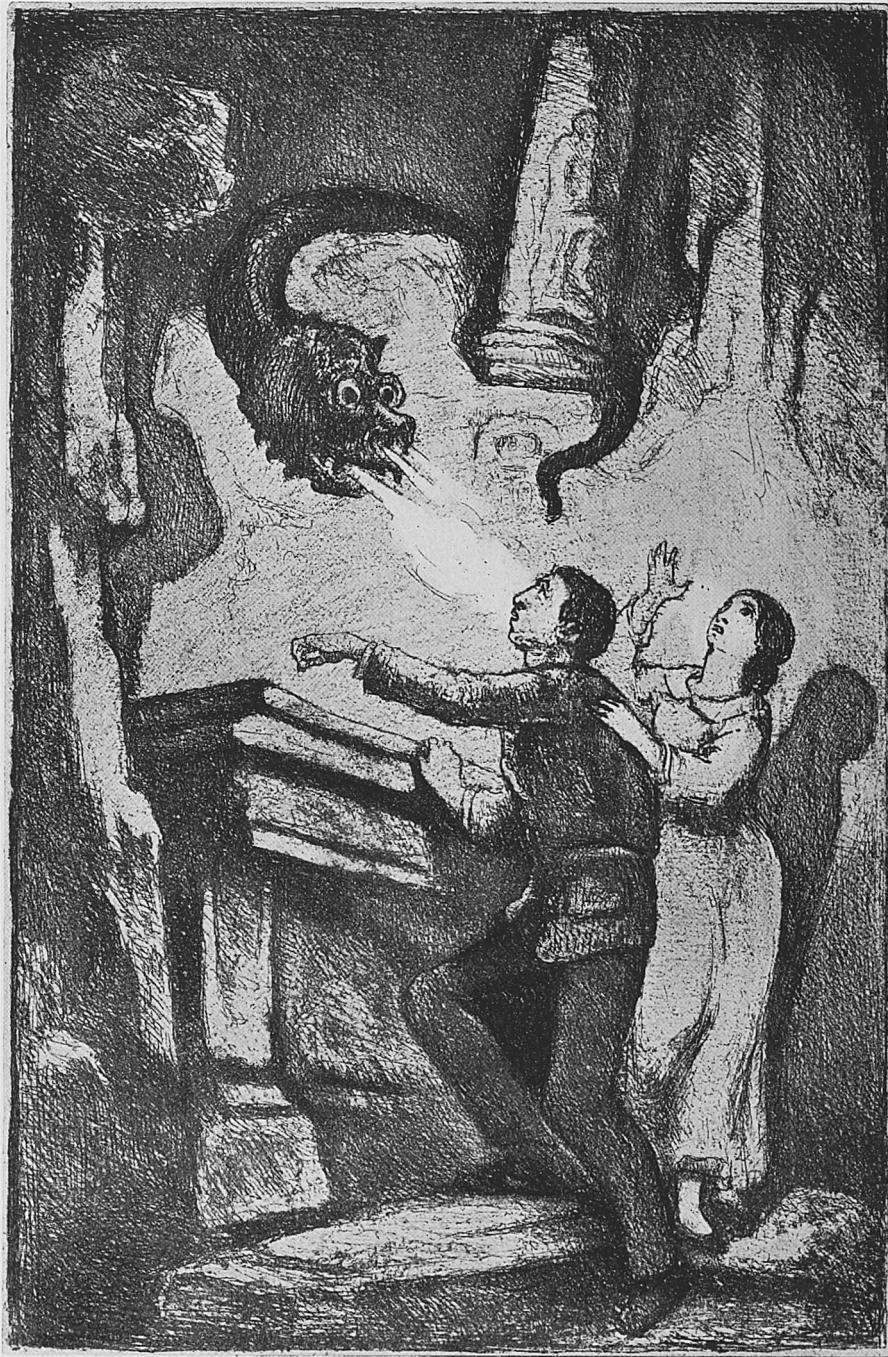
A gust of fresh air came from behind them, seeming almost to blow the sunlight into the gorge and to dissipate the heavy vapors.

"Come" he said and, still holding her hand, he drew her back down the path.

Nothing was said as they walked. There seemed no need—nothing to explain: only a great exultation possessed him, and he could feel her blood leaping through her veins. Not to shout or to dance was an effort! Off the shore he could see his felucca lying at anchor, with Demetrios and Alkibiades wondering doubtless what had become of him. He had forgotten all about them. Her hand still in his, they went in to where Hendon sat waiting.

Duffield Osborne





"THEN, DRAWING THE RING SHE HAD GIVEN HIM FROM HIS
FINGER, HE STEPPED FORWARD AND LAID IT ON THE
MIDDLE OF THE RUINED ALTAR!"

ETCHING BY EUGENE HIGGINS

(See page 42)